

## **Information Systems Management Study**

A study of information systems management practices in State Units and Area Agencies on Aging (SUAs and AAAs) was recently conducted with AoA funding by Westat under a subcontract to the National Association of State Units on Aging (NASUA). A central focus of this study is the Administration on Aging (AoA) National Aging Program Information System (NAPIS) State Program Report (SPR), and to show the manner in which SUAs and AAAs, with their service providers, collect, tabulate, and transmit information about Older Americans Act (OAA) programs.

### **Study Objectives**

The study focused on cost-effective methods to:

1. Define the common data requirements necessary for policy and management decision making, including state and local initiatives (including advocacy) so as to limit federal requirements to a sub-set of state and local requirements;
2. Eliminate the need for elderly individuals and caregivers to provide identifying information repeatedly to various service providers;
3. Improve data collection methods and systems so as to insure obtaining unduplicated counts of individuals across service providers and geographic locations; and
4. Reduce the expense of reporting system fragmentation by taking advantage of network economies of scale for information systems development and management without compromising competition in the marketplace.

### **Study Methods**

The study had three major operational components: 1) a telephone survey of all SUAs (49 of 51 responded), 2) follow-up telephone interviews with 10 SUAs for additional insights, and 3) five case study site visits.

### **Preliminary Findings:**

The final report is being completed and will be posted on this site. However, highlights and preliminary findings of the study include:

- 35 SUAs use PC network/client-server systems with relational data base software;
- 9 SUAs employ Web hosting of data bases;
- Only two states use mainframe systems and programming languages;
- Including new systems currently under development, 18 SUAs will be using internally-developed software for OAA reporting purposes, while 31 SUAs will be using commercial applications;
- In virtually all cases, successful MIS development work occurred: 1) under the leadership of a key individual, who 2) secured or received tangible commitments of funding, and 3) where the SUA, AAAs, and providers cooperated in a joint effort to design, select, and implement a state-wide information management system;
- 33 SUAs reported that the AAAs use the same information system for collecting, tabulating, and reporting OAA information (Vertical Integration);

- However, while 80 percent of SUA information systems involve AAA participation, only about half (55%) of all SUA information systems involve provider participation;
- Horizontal integration refers to the coverage of multiple funding streams and programs within the scope of a state's information system. The funding streams and programs with a high degree of integration with OAA information systems include Social Services Block Grant, the Nutrition Services Incentive Program, state-funded home and community-based services, and participant contributions;
- The study found that state Medicaid agencies frequently required SUAs, AAAs, and service providers to use separate Waiver software, limiting the ability to integrate the data collection requirements of multiple funding streams within a single information system;
- A large percentage of states (86%) have computer information systems that maintain records for individual clients, at least for OAA Registered Services. A similar number (83%) record the specific services these individuals receive;
- Approximately one-quarter of SUA systems employ computer-readable media, such as the use of barcodes and readers, for capturing data about clients and services;
- The most frequently occurring functional status and health information that SUAs collect on individual clients, includes ADL and IADL limitations (81% of SUAs) and a nutrition risk assessment (80%) (e.g., the Nutrition Screening Initiative (NSI) scores). The presence of a family caregiver was the third most prevalent item that SUAs collect on individual clients for their Registered Services, covering 65 percent of the SUAs; and
- Only 28 percent of SUA information systems linked OAA and Medicaid data to show which clients were common to both programs.

The survey also asked if SUAs used data from their information systems for purposes, beyond AoA reporting. These additional data uses included:

- Annual or periodic reports to inform the general public about state and community programs on aging: 89% (42 SUAs);
- Budget justification and accountability to state legislatures and others: 92% (44 SUAs);
- Advocacy: 87%, (41 SUAs); and
- Monitoring and quality assurance: 87% (41 SUAs).